

The New York Times Whites Out Ukraine's Brown Shirts

By [Robert Parry](#)

Global Research, February 11, 2015

[Consortium News](#)

Region: [Russia and FSU, USA](#)

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In covering the Ukraine crisis, the New York Times continues its descent into becoming little more than a propaganda organ for the U.S. State Department and the Kiev regime, again refusing to acknowledge the role of neo-Nazi militias in the civil war against ethnic Russians in the east.

On Wednesday, the Times published [a long article](#) by Rick Lyman that presented the situation in the port city of Mariupol as if the advance by ethnic Russian rebels amounted to the arrival of barbarians at the gate while the inhabitants were being bravely defended by the forces of civilization. But then the article cites the key role in that defense played by the Azov battalion.

Though the article provides much color and detail – and quotes an Azov leader prominently – it leaves out one salient and well-known fact about the Azov battalion, that it is composed of neo-Nazis who display the Swastika, SS markings and other Nazi symbols.

But this inconvenient truth – that neo-Nazis have been central to Kiev's "self-defense forces" from last February's coup to the present – would presumably disrupt the desired propaganda message. So the New York Times just leaves it out and refers to Azov as simply a "volunteer unit."



Nazi symbols on helmets worn by members of Ukraine's Azov battalion. (As filmed by a Norwegian film crew and shown on German TV)

What's particularly egregious about this omission is that the connections between the Azov battalion and Nazism have been well-documented for months and even acknowledged by officials of the Kiev regime, who knowingly sent these and other extremists into the battle because they are the fiercest fighters.

Even the Times itself has included at least one brief reference to this reality, though buried

deep inside an article. On Aug. 10, 2014, a Times' [article](#) mentioned the neo-Nazi Azov battalion in the last three paragraphs of a lengthy story on another topic.

"The fighting for Donetsk has taken on a lethal pattern: The regular army bombards separatist positions from afar, followed by chaotic, violent assaults by some of the half-dozen or so paramilitary groups surrounding Donetsk who are willing to plunge into urban combat,"

the Times reported.

"Officials in Kiev say the militias and the army coordinate their actions, but the militias, which count about 7,000 fighters, are angry and, at times, uncontrollable. One known as Azov, which took over the village of Marinka, flies a neo-Nazi symbol resembling a Swastika as its flag." [See Consortiumnews.com's "[NYT Discovers Ukraine's Neo-Nazis at War.](#)"]

Not a Mistake

The conservative London Telegraph offered more details about the Azov battalion in [an article](#) by correspondent Tom Parfitt, who wrote:

"Kiev's use of volunteer paramilitaries to stamp out the Russian-backed Donetsk and Luhansk 'people's republics'... should send a shiver down Europe's spine.

"Recently formed battalions such as Donbas, Dnipro and Azov, with several thousand men under their command, are officially under the control of the interior ministry but their financing is murky, their training inadequate and their ideology often alarming. The Azov men use the neo-Nazi Wolfsangel (Wolf's Hook) symbol on their banner and members of the battalion are openly white supremacists, or anti-Semites."

Based on interviews with militia members, the Telegraph reported that some of the fighters doubted the reality of the Holocaust, expressed admiration for Adolf Hitler and acknowledged that they are indeed Nazis.

Andriy Biletsky, the Azov commander, "is also head of an extremist Ukrainian group called the Social National Assembly," according to the Telegraph article which quoted a commentary by Biletsky as declaring: "The historic mission of our nation in this critical moment is to lead the White Races of the world in a final crusade for their survival. A crusade against the Semite-led Untermenschen."

In other words, for the first time since World War II, a government had dispatched Nazi storm troopers to attack a European population - and officials in Kiev knew what they were doing. The Telegraph questioned Ukrainian authorities in Kiev who acknowledged that they were aware of the extremist ideologies of some militias but insisted that the higher priority was having troops who were strongly motivated to fight. [See Consortiumnews.com's "[Ignoring Ukraine's Neo-Nazi Storm Troopers.](#)"]

But a rebel counteroffensive by ethnic Russians last August reversed many of Kiev's gains and drove the Azov and other government forces back to the port city of Mariupol, where

Foreign Policy's reporter Alec Luhn also encountered these neo-Nazis. He [wrote](#):

"Blue and yellow Ukrainian flags fly over Mariupol's burned-out city administration building and at military checkpoints around the city, but at a sport school near a huge metallurgical plant, another symbol is just as prominent: the [wolfsangel](#) ('wolf trap') symbol that was widely used in the Third Reich and has been adopted by neo-Nazi groups. ...

"Pro-Russian forces have said they are fighting against Ukrainian nationalists and 'fascists' in the conflict, and in the case of Azov and other battalions, these claims are essentially true." [See Consortiumnews.com's "[Seeing No Neo-Nazi Militias in Ukraine](#)."]]

SS Helmets

More evidence continued to emerge about the presence of Nazis in the ranks of Ukrainian government fighters. Germans were shocked to see video of Azov militia soldiers decorating their gear with the Swastika and the "SS rune." NBC News [reported](#):

"Germans were confronted with images of their country's dark past ... when German public broadcaster ZDF showed video of Ukrainian soldiers with Nazi symbols on their helmets in its evening newscast.

"The video was shot ... in Ukraine by a camera team from Norwegian broadcaster TV2. 'We were filming a report about Ukraine's AZOV battalion in the eastern city of Urzuf, when we came across these soldiers,' Oysten Bogen, a correspondent for the private television station, told NBC News. "Minutes before the images were taped, Bogen said he had asked a spokesperson whether the battalion had fascist tendencies. 'The reply was: absolutely not, we are just Ukrainian nationalists,' Bogen said."

Despite the newsworthiness of a U.S.-backed government dispatching neo-Nazi storm troopers to attack Ukrainian cities, the major U.S. news outlets have gone to extraordinary lengths to excuse this behavior, with the Washington Post publishing a rationalization that Azov's use of the Swastika was merely "romantic."

This curious description of the symbol most associated with the human devastation of the Holocaust and World War II can be found in the last three paragraphs of [a Post lead story](#) published in September 2014. Post correspondent Anthony Faiola portrayed the Azov fighters as "battle-scarred patriots" nobly resisting "Russian aggression" and willing to resort to "guerrilla war" if necessary.

The article found nothing objectionable about Azov's plans for "sabotage, targeted assassinations and other insurgent tactics" against Russians, although such actions in other contexts are regarded as terrorism. The extremists even extended their threats to the government of Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko if he agrees to a peace deal with the ethnic Russian east that is not to the militia's liking.

"If Kiev reaches a deal with rebels that they don't support, paramilitary fighters say they could potentially strike pro-Russian targets on their own — or even turn on the government itself," the article stated.

The Post article - like almost all of its coverage of Ukraine - was laudatory about the Kiev forces fighting ethnic Russians in the east, but the newspaper did have to do some quick thinking to explain a photograph of a Swastika gracing an Azov brigade barracks.

So, in the last three paragraphs of the story, Faiola reported:

“One platoon leader, who called himself Kirt, conceded that the group’s far right views had attracted about two dozen foreign fighters from around Europe.

“In one room, a recruit had emblazoned a swastika above his bed. But Kirt ... dismissed questions of ideology, saying that the volunteers — many of them still teenagers — embrace symbols and espouse extremist notions as part of some kind of ‘romantic’ idea.”

So, why did the New York Times excise this well-documented history as it touted the Azov battalion to its readers on Wednesday? Isn’t the role of neo-Nazis newsworthy? In other contexts, the Times is quick to note and condemn any sign of a Nazi resurgence in Europe. However, in Ukraine, where neo-Nazis, such as Andriy Parubiy served as the coup regime’s first national security chief and neo-Nazi militias are at the center of regime’s military operations, the Times goes silent on the subject.

It can’t be because the Times is unaware of what has been extensively reported about the Azov battalion. The Times could even find a brief reference in one of its own prior stories. The only logical answer is that the Times is committed to a propaganda position on the Ukraine crisis and doesn’t want the facts to get in the way of its preferred storyline.

*Investigative reporter **Robert Parry** broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for The Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. You can buy his latest book, *America’s Stolen Narrative*, either in [print here](#) or as an e-book (from [Amazon](#) and [barnesandnoble.com](#)). You also can order Robert Parry’s trilogy on the Bush Family and its connections to various right-wing operatives for only \$34. The trilogy includes *America’s Stolen Narrative*. For details on this offer, [click here](#).*

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